

"Freed from Sin through Christ's Death and Resurrection"

by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus

Preached on the

Text: Romans 6:1-14

DATE: January 10, 2010

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, OUR CRUCIFIED, RISEN AND ASCENDED LORD, WHO IS NOT DEAD BUT ALIVE, WHO IS NOT IN THE TOMB, BUT IS WITH US HERE, NOW WITH HIS LOVE AND HIS POWER AS HE LIVES AND REIGNS AT THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN OF GOD...

Free from sin.

Followers of Jesus are free from sin. But what does that mean? In a practical everyday sense – what does our freedom from sin mean? Sometimes it helps to talk about what it doesn't mean. Freedom from sin doesn't mean we will never feel tempted. The devil will continue to tempt us. The world will continue to tempt us. Our bodies will continue to crave sin. So even though we are free from sin – we will still experience temptation. We will still have to fight and struggle against temptation to sin. In fact your freedom from sin enables you to struggle and fight against sin. Secondly, freedom from sin doesn't mean that you will never sin again.

While you are in this fallen world sin will continue to claim some victories in your life and you will continue to need God's grace and forgiveness. Although we are called to strive with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength to love God and others we will, at times, fall to sin's selfish temptations.

So freedom from sin doesn't mean we'll not battle with temptations and freedom from sin doesn't mean we will never sin again. So what does it mean? Freedom from sin means that the power of sin no longer controls our life. It means that Jesus rules and controls our lives – our hearts, minds, and spirits. Romans 8:9 reads, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit..." Sin doesn't rule over you – sin has no controlling power over you. Don't let the devil lie to you and convince you it does. As followers of Jesus the devil constantly lies to us.

He reminds us of the sins we have committed and says, "see, you're not really free from sin." He tempts us over and over again – and we wrestle and struggle against the temptations and then he says – "see, you're not really free from sin." Just because we are tempted and tried and sometimes fall does not mean we are not free. God has placed us under his grace for the rest of our lives because he knows that we will fight and struggle and sometimes lose the battles. So he covers us with His grace.

If freedom meant that we would not sin or struggle, we wouldn't need to be under God's grace. I was witnessing to a friend a number of years ago while I was a pastor in Saskatchewan. I remember talking to him about how we all sin and need God's forgiveness and that God provides that forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ his son. I shared with him that Jesus has paid for all sin for all people for all time when he suffered as our substitute on the cross. My friend understood the concept that Christ has atoned for the sins of mankind including his own. He then asked the following question... "If all sins are paid for then what will stop people from sinning. If they are all paid for and forgiven then why not have all the fun you like." Sort of like if someone gave you a limitless credit card and you could spend all you like because it's all been paid for.

This is another thing that Freedom from sin is not...Freedom from sin is not a license to sin all we want. In fact, this is another lie of the devil designed to take away our freedom from sin and once again allow sin to rule over us. St. Paul dealt with this sort of logic in his day and wrote about it in his letter to the Romans... In 5:20 Paul writes, "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more..." In other words, God's grace was more powerful than sin and no matter how much sin increased, God's grace covered over it. But listen to what some people reasoned... Romans 6:1, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" "Since more sins caused God's grace to abound more, let's sin as much as we can so that God's grace will be even greater." Sin is rebellion against God – and God's grace is not to be used by us to increase our rebellion against him. This is the logic of the devil once again. He will use anything to keep us from obeying God. God's grace was given to us in order to free us to obey Him, not rebel against him.

Listen to how Paul explains this... Romans 6:1-4, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Brothers and sisters – this is the difference between your faith being a reality and your faith being nothing but knowledge or an idea._Paul says – "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" A spiritual death and rebirth has happened in your life – you died to sin – you can't live in it any longer._This isn't simply a concept to be memorized – it's a spiritual reality to be lived out._He goes on... "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Jesus Christ the Son of God, came from heaven to our earth to save us from real sin, real evil, real death, a real devil, and a real hell. He suffered on the cross to pay for our real sins – he endured hell for us – he defeated death and the devil for us. The cost of our salvation was beyond measure – the suffering and death of God's Son. Our baptisms unite us with Jesus. They unite us with his death to sin. They unite us in his burial. They unite us in his resurrection from the dead. Why do we need to be united with Jesus like this? Romans 6:6-10 reads, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God." The death he died he died to sin once for all – we are united with him in his death to sin.

Thus sin can no longer control us – we are free. We are united with him in his new resurrected life – a life lived completely to God. Thus we are free to live completely for God. But Paul's point is that these are not merely theological concepts. These are actual spiritual realities. His death and resurrection were real. Our union with him through baptism is real. Our death to sin and resurrection to a new life is real. So real that Paul says these realities are to govern our entire existence.

Romans 6:11-14, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its

evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

We are to see ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus – this is our reality. We are to fight against temptation – resisting the power of sin – not letting it rule in our bodies – because the reality is that we are no longer controlled by it. We are not to offer our bodies to sin for it to use and control but rather we are to offer our bodies to God – because the reality is that we are united with Christ in his new resurrected life – and we totally live for God. Sin is not our master because we live under God's grace. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Romans 6: We know we've died to sin with Jesus in our Baptism. We know we've been raised with him to a new life. Being united with Jesus in his resurrection we are to live a new life NOW. Mark this well, brothers and sisters... this knowing dare not remain a mere knowing. The reign of sin has been broken in your life. Therefore do not let sin reign in your body. To know Christ is to be under this command – that sin not rule over you. To know Christ is to have the power to obey it. And we need that power from him. For our bodies are still mortal. The final redemption of the body which shall make our bodies perfect instruments of obedience is still to come. This body therefore still has on it the mark of this age, the age in which sin reigns in death; This body is perpetually threatened by the instinctive stirrings of sin that may again commit it to death. Its desires are still the desires of this world, not those of the world to come. To make this body the expressive instrument of our new life therefore calls for a continual exercise of the liberated will, a constant resolute denial of the passions of the body. Daily denial of self, taking up the cross, is following Jesus. But there is also the positive command – to serve God in the newness of our resurrection life.

To yield our body to God as instruments of righteousness for concrete, bodily actions that embody and proclaim our new life. A life lived not for ourselves but for God and others. The power to live this life comes from one place. God's grace. Without God's love and forgiveness, we would not have the power to live out our new life for one moment. Are you living out the spirituality of your baptism into Jesus death and new life? Do you consider yourself dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus?